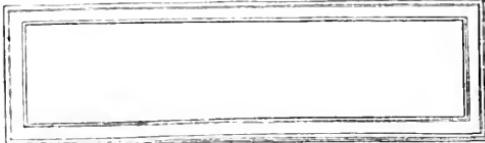


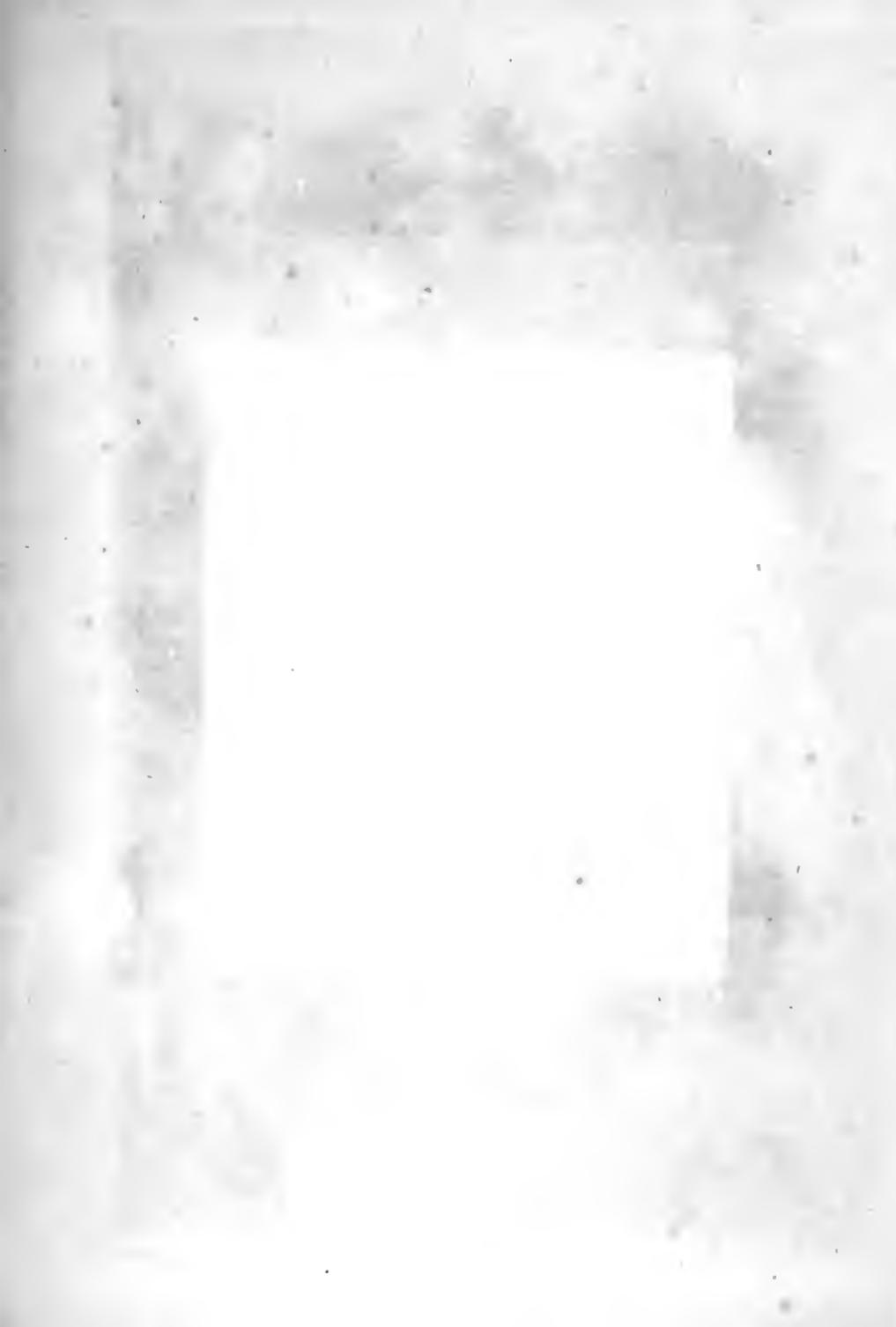
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# A CENTURY OF ROUNDELS

BY

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE



*THIRD EDITION*

London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1892

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## DEDICATION.

TO

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

SONGS light as these may sound, though deep and strong  
The heart spake through them, scarce should hope to please  
Ears tuned to strains of loftier thoughts than throng  
    Songs light as these.

Yet grace may set their sometime doubt at ease,  
Nor need their too rash reverence fear to wrong  
The shrine it serves at and the hope it sees.

For childlike loves and laughers thence prolong  
Notes that bid enter, fearless as the breeze,  
Even to the shrine of holiest-hearted song,  
    Songs light as these.

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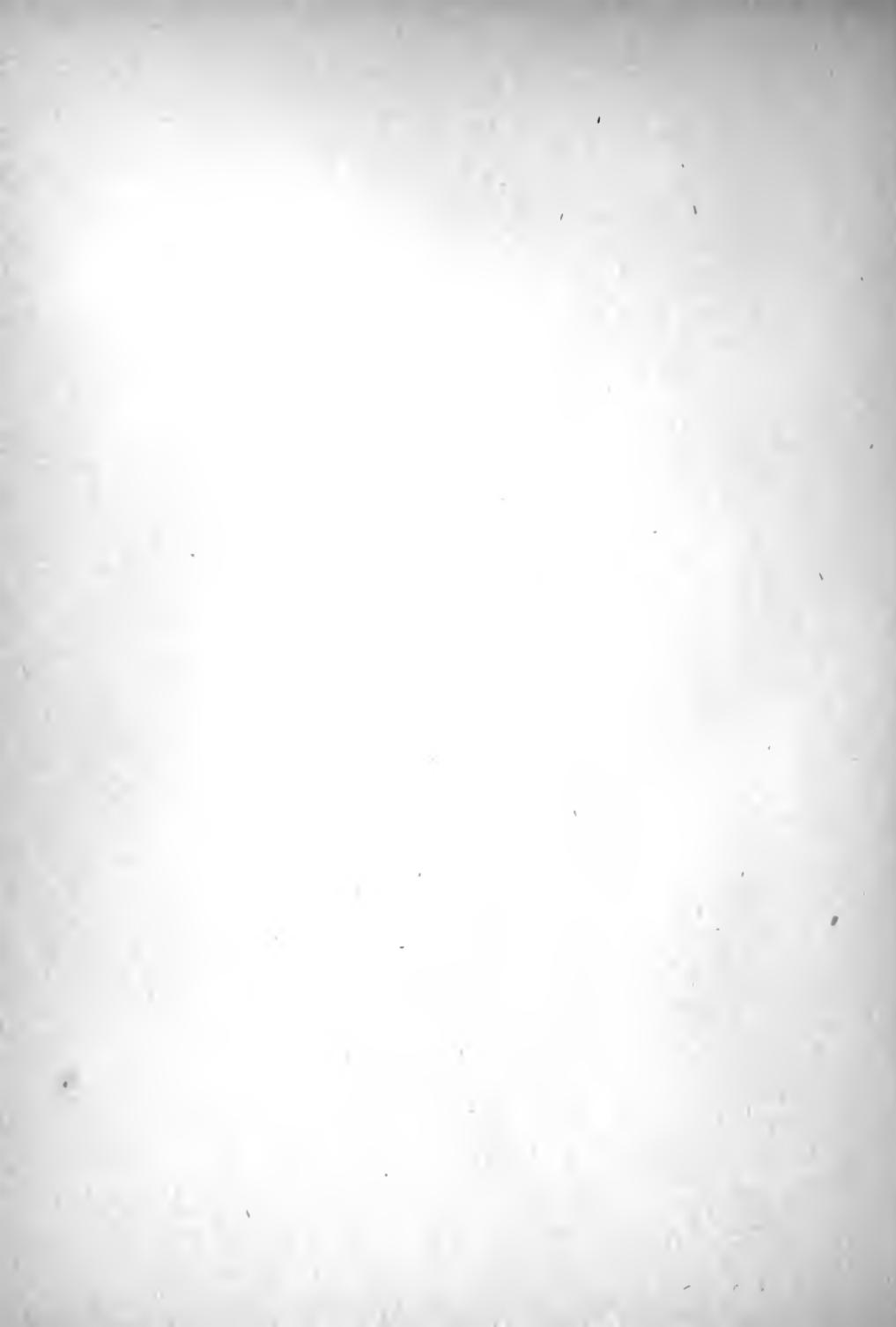
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*IN HARBOUR.*

I

GOODNIGHT and goodbye to the life whose signs denote us  
As mourners clothed with regret for the life gone by ;  
To the waters of gloom whence winds of the dayspring  
float us

Goodnight and goodbye.

A time is for mourning, a season for grief to sigh ;  
But were we not fools and blind, by day to devote us  
As thralls to the darkness, unseen of the sundawn's eye ?

We have drunken of Lethe at length, we have eaten of  
lotus ;  
What hurts it us here that sorrows are born and die ?  
We have said to the dream that caressed and the dread  
that smote us

Goodnight and goodbye.

B

## II.

Outside of the port ye are moored in, lying  
Close from the wind and at ease from the tide,  
What sounds come swelling, what notes fall dying  
    Outside?

They will not cease, they will not abide :  
Voices of presage in darkness crying  
Pass and return and relapse aside.

Ye see not, but hear ye not wild wings flying  
To the future that wakes from the past that died?  
Is grief still sleeping, is joy not sighing  
    Outside?

*THE WAY OF THE WIND.*

THE wind's way in the deep sky's hollow  
None may measure, as none can say  
How the heart in her shows the swallow  
    The wind's way.

Hope nor fear can avail to stay  
Waves that whiten on wrecks that wallow,  
Times and seasons that wane and slay.

Life and love, till the strong night swallow  
Thought and hope and the red last ray,  
Swim the waters of years that follow  
    The wind's way.

*'HAD I WIST.'*

HAD I wist, when life was like a warm wind playing  
Light and loud through sundawn and the dew's bright  
mist,  
How the time should come for hearts to sigh in saying  
‘Had I wist’—

Surely not the roses, laughing as they kissed,  
Not the lovelier laugh of seas in sunshine swaying,  
Should have lured my soul to look thereon and list.

Now the wind is like a soul cast out and praying  
Vainly, prayers that pierce not ears when hearts resist :  
Now mine own soul sighs, adrift as wind and straying,  
‘Had I wist.’

*RECOLLECTIONS.*

## L

YEARS upon years, as a course of clouds that thicken  
Thronging the ways of the wind that shifts and veers,  
Pass, and the flames of remembered fires requicken

Years upon years.

Surely the thought in a man's heart hopes or fears  
Now that forgetfulness needs must here have stricken  
Anguish, and sweetened the sealed-up springs of tears.

Ah, but the strength of regrets that strain and sicken,  
Yearning for love that the veil of death endears,  
Slackens not wing for the wings of years that quicken—

Years upon years.

## II.

Years upon years, and the flame of love's high altar  
Trembles and sinks, and the sense of listening ears  
Heeds not the sound that it heard of love's blithe psalter  
Years upon years.

Only the sense of a heart that hearkens hears,  
Louder than dreams that assail and doubts that palter,  
Sorrow that slept and that wakes ere sundawn peers.

Wakes, that the heart may behold, and yet not falter,  
Faces of children as stars unknown of, spheres  
Seen but of love, that endures though all things alter,  
Years upon years.

III.

Years upon years, as a watch by night that passes,  
Pass, and the light of their eyes is fire that sears  
Slowly the hopes of the fruit that life amasses

Years upon years.

Pale as the glimmer of stars on moorland meres  
Lighten the shadows reverberate from the glasses  
Held in their hands as they pass among their peers.

Lights that are shadows, as ghosts on graveyard grasses,  
Moving on paths that the moon of memory cheers,  
Shew but as mists over cloudy mountain passes

Years upon years.

*TIME AND LIFE.*

## I.

TIME, thy name is sorrow, says the stricken  
Heart of life, laid waste with wasting flame  
Ere the change of things and thoughts requicken,  
Time, thy name.

Girt about with shadow, blind and lame,  
Ghosts of things that smite and thoughts that sicken  
Hunt and hound thee down to death and shame.

Eyes of hours whose paces halt or quicken  
Read in bloodred lines of loss and blame,  
Writ where cloud and darkness round it thicken,  
Time, thy name.

## II.

Nay, but rest is born of me for healing,  
—So might haply time, with voice represt,  
Speak: is grief the last gift of my dealing?

Nay, but rest.

All the world is wearied, east and west,  
Tired with toil to watch the slow sun wheeling,  
Twelve loud hours of life's laborious quest.

Eyes forspent with vigil, faint and reeling,  
Find at last my comfort, and are blest,  
Not with rapturous light of life's revealing—

Nay, but rest.

*A DIALOGUE.*

## I.

DEATH, if thou wilt, fain would I plead with thee :  
Canst thou not spare, of all our hopes have built,  
One shelter where our spirits fain would be,  
Death, if thou wilt ?

No dome with suns and dews impearled and gilt,  
Imperial : but some roof of wildwood tree,  
Too mean for sceptre's heft or swordblade's hilt.

Some low sweet roof where love might live, set free  
From change and fear and dreams of grief or guilt ;  
Canst thou not leave life even thus much to see,  
Death, if thou wilt ?

## II.

Man, what art thou to speak and plead with me?  
What knowest thou of my workings, where and how  
What things I fashion? Nay, behold and see,  
Man, what art thou?

Thy fruits of life, and blossoms of thy bough,  
What are they but my seedlings? Earth and sea  
Bear nought but when I breathe on it must bow.

Bow thou too down before me: though thou be  
Great, all the pride shall fade from off thy brow,  
When Time and strong Oblivion ask of thee,  
Man, what art thou?

## III.

Death, if thou be or be not, as was said,  
Immortal; if thou make us nought, or we  
Survive: thy power is made but of our dread,  
Death, if thou be.

Thy might is made out of our fear of thee.  
Who fears thee not, hath plucked from off thine head  
The crown of cloud that darkens earth and sea.

Earth, sea, and sky, as rain or vapour shed,  
Shall vanish; all the shows of them shall flee:  
Then shall we know full surely, quick or dead,  
Death, if thou be.

*PLUS ULTRA.*

FAR beyond the sunrise and the sunset rises  
Heaven, with worlds on worlds that lighten and respond:  
Thought can see not thence the goal of hope's surmises  
Far beyond.

Night and day have made an everlasting bond  
Each with each to hide in yet more deep disguises  
Truth, till souls of men that thirst for truth despond.

All that man in pride of spirit slight or prizes,  
All the dreams that make him fearful, fain, or fond,  
Fade at forethought's touch of life's unknown surprises  
Far beyond.

*A DEAD FRIEND.*

## I.

GONE, O gentle heart and true,  
Friend of hopes foregone,  
Hopes and hopeful days with you  
Gone?

Days of old that shone  
Saw what none shall see anew,  
When we gazed thereon.

Soul as clear as sunlit dew,  
Why so soon pass on,  
Forth from all we loved and knew  
Gone?

II.

Friend of many a season fled,  
What may sorrow send  
Toward thee now from lips that said  
‘Friend’?

Sighs and songs to blend  
Praise with pain uncomfeted  
Though the praise ascend?

Darkness hides no dearer head:  
Why should darkness end  
Day so soon, O dear and dead  
Friend?

## III.

Dear in death, thou hast thy part  
    Yet in life, to cheer  
Hearts that held thy gentle heart  
    Dear.

Time and chance may sear  
    Hope with grief, and death may part  
Hand from hand's clasp here :

Memory, blind with tears that start,  
    Sees through every tear  
All that made thee, as thou art,  
    Dear.

IV.

True and tender, single-souled,  
What should memory do  
Weeping o'er the trust we hold  
True?

Known and loved of few,  
But of these, though small their fold,  
Loved how well were you !

Change, that makes of new things old,  
Leaves one old thing new ;  
Love which promised truth, and told  
True.

## v.

Kind as heaven, while earth's control  
Still had leave to bind  
Thee, thy heart was toward man's whole  
Kind.

Thee no shadows blind  
Now : the change of hours that roll  
Leaves thy sleep behind.

Love, that hears thy death-bell toll  
Yet, may call to mind  
Scarce a soul as thy sweet soul  
Kind.

VI.

How should life, O friend, forget  
Death, whose guest art thou ?  
Faith responds to love's regret,  
How ?

Still, for us that bow  
Sorrowing, still, though life be set,  
Shines thy bright mild brow.

Yea, though death and thou be met,  
Love may find thee now  
Still, albeit we know not yet  
How.

## VII.

Past as music fades, that shone  
While its life might last ;  
As a song-bird's shadow flown  
Past !

Death's reverberate blast  
Now for music's lord has blown  
Whom thy love held fast.

Dead thy king, and void his throne :  
Yet for grief at last  
Love makes music of his own  
Past.

*PAST DAYS.*

## I.

DEAD and gone, the days we had together,  
Shadow-stricken all the lights that shone  
Round them, flown as flies the blown foam's feather,  
Dead and gone.

Where we went, we twain, in time foregone,  
Forth by land and sea, and cared not whether,  
If I go again, I go alone.

Bound am I with time as with a tether ;  
Thee perchance death leads enfranchised on,  
Far from deathlike life and changeful weather,  
Dead and gone.

## II.

Above the sea and sea-washed town we dwelt,  
We twain together, two brief summers, free  
From heed of hours as light as clouds that melt  
Above the sea.

Free from all heed of aught at all were we,  
Save chance of change that clouds or sunbeams dealt  
And gleam of heaven to windward or to lee.

The Norman downs with bright grey waves for belt  
Were more for us than inland ways might be ;  
A clearer sense of nearer heaven was felt  
Above the sea.

III.

Cliffs and downs and headlands which the forward-hasting  
Flight of dawn and eve empurples and embrowns,  
Wings of wild sea-winds and stormy seasons wasting  
Cliffs and downs,

These, or ever man was, were : the same sky frowns,  
Laughs, and lightens, as before his soul, forecasting  
Times to be, conceived such hopes as time discrowns.

These we loved of old : but now for me the blasting  
Breath of death makes dull the bright small seaward towns,  
Clothes with human change these all but everlasting  
Cliffs and downs.

*AUTUMN AND WINTER.*

## I.

THREE months bade wane and wax the wintering moon  
Between two dates of death, while men were fain  
Yet of the living light that all too soon

Three months bade wane.

Cold autumn, wan with wrath of wind and rain,  
Saw pass a soul sweet as the sovereign tune  
That death smote silent when he smote again.

First went my friend, in life's mid light of noon,  
Who loved the lord of music : then the strain  
Whence earth was kindled like as heaven in June

Three months bade wane.

## II.

A herald soul before its master's flying  
Touched by some few moons first the darkling goal  
Where shades rose up to greet the shade, espying  
A herald soul ;

Shades of dead lords of music, who control  
Men living by the might of men undying,  
With strength of strains that make delight of dole.

The deep dense dust on death's dim threshold lying  
Trembled with sense of kindling sound that stole  
Through darkness, and the night gave ear, descrying  
A herald soul.

## III.

One went before, one after, but so fast  
They seem gone hence together, from the shore  
Whence we now gaze : yet ere the mightier passed  
    One went before ;

One whose whole heart of love, being set of yore  
On that high joy which music lends us, cast  
Light round him forth of music's radiant store.

Then went, while earth on winter glared aghast,  
The mortal god he worshipped, through the door  
Wherethrough so late, his lover to the last,  
    One went before.

## IV.

A star had set an hour before the sun  
Sank from the skies wherethrough his heart's pulse yet  
Thrills audibly : but few took heed, or none,  
A star had set.

All heaven rings back, sonorous with regret,  
The deep dirge of the sunset : how should one  
Soft star be missed in all the concourse met ?

But, O sweet single heart whose work is done,  
Whose songs are silent, how should I forget  
That ere the sunset's fiery goal was won  
A star had set?

*THE DEATH OF RICHARD WAGNER.*

## I.

MOURNING on earth, as when dark hours descend,  
Wide-winged with plagues, from heaven; when hope and mirth  
Wane, and no lips rebuke or reprehend  
Mourning on earth.

The soul wherein her songs of death and birth,  
Darkness and light, were wont to sound and blend,  
Now silent, leaves the whole world less in worth.

Winds that make moan and triumph, skies that bend,  
Thunders, and sound of tides in gulf and firth,  
Spake through his spirit of speech, whose death should send  
Mourning on earth.

II.

The world's great heart, whence all things strange and rare  
Take form and sound, that each inseparable part  
May bear its burden in all tuned thoughts that share  
The world's great heart—

The fountain forces, whence like steeds that start  
Leap forth the powers of earth and fire and air,  
Seas that revolve and rivers that depart—

Spake, and were turned to song : yea, all they were,  
With all their works, found in his mastering art  
Speech as of powers whose uttered word laid bare  
The world's great heart.

## III.

From the depths of the sea, from the wellsprings of earth,  
from the wastes of the midmost night,  
From the fountains of darkness and tempest and thunder,  
from heights where the soul would be,  
The spell of the mage of music evoked their sense, as an  
unknown light  
From the depths of the sea.

As a vision of heaven from the hollows of ocean, that  
none but a god might see,  
Rose out of the silence of things unknown of a presence,  
a form, a might,  
And we heard as a prophet that hears God's message  
against him, and may not flee.

Eye might not endure it, but ear and heart with a rapture  
of dark delight,  
With a terror and wonder whose core was joy, and a  
passion of thought set free,  
Felt only the rising of doom divine as a sundawn risen to  
sight  
From the depths of the sea.

*TWO PRELUDES.*

## I.

## LOHENGRIN.

Love, out of the depth of things,  
As a dewfall felt from above,  
From the heaven whence only springs  
Love,

Love, heard from the heights thereof,  
The clouds and the watersprings,  
Draws close as the clouds remove.

And the soul in it speaks and sings,  
A swan sweet-souled as a dove,  
An echo that only rings  
Love.

## II.

## TRISTAN UND ISOLDE.

Fate, out of the deep sea's gloom,  
When a man's heart's pride grows great,  
And nought seems now to foredoom  
Fate,

Fate, laden with fears in wait,  
Draws close through the clouds that loom,  
Till the soul see, all too late,

More dark than a dead world's tomb,  
More high than the sheer dawn's gate,  
More deep than the wide sea's womb,  
Fate.

*THE LUTE AND THE LYRE.*

DEEP desire, that pierces heart and spirit to the root,  
Finds reluctant voice in verse that yearns like soaring fire,  
Takes exultant voice when music holds in high pursuit  
    Deep desire.

Keen as burns the passion of the rose whose buds  
    respire,  
Strong as grows the yearning of the blossom toward the  
    fruit,  
Sounds the secret half unspoken ere the deep tones tire.

Slow subsides the rapture that possessed love's flower-  
    soft lute,  
Slow the palpitation of the triumph of the lyre :  
Still the soul feels burn, a flame unslaked though these  
    be mute,  
    Deep desire.

*PLUS INTRA.*

SOUL within sense, immeasurable, obscure,  
Insepulchred and deathless, through the dense  
Deep elements may scarce be felt as pure  
    Soul within sense.

From depth and height by measurers left immense,  
Through sound and shape and colour, comes the unsure  
Vague utterance, fitful with supreme suspense.

All that may pass, and all that must endure,  
Song speaks not, painting shews not : more intense  
And keen than these, art wakes with music's lure  
    Soul within sense.

*CHANGE.*

BUT now life's face behoden  
Seemed bright as heaven's bare brow  
With hope of gifts withholden  
But now.

From time's full-flowering bough  
Each bud spake bloom to emboden  
Love's heart, and seal his vow.

Joy's eyes grew deep with olden  
Dreams, born he wist not how ;  
Thought's meanest garb was golden ;  
But now !

*A BABY'S DEATH.*

## I.

A LITTLE soul scarce fledged for earth  
Takes wing with heaven again for goal  
Even while we hailed as fresh from birth  
A little soul.

Our thoughts ring sad as bells that toll,  
Not knowing beyond this blind world's girth  
What things are writ in heaven's full scroll.

Our fruitfulness is there but dearth,  
And all things held in time's control  
Seem there, perchance, ill dreams, not worth  
A little soul.

II.

The little feet that never trod  
Earth, never strayed in field or street,  
What hand leads upward back to God  
The little feet?

A rose in June's most honied heat,  
When life makes keen the kindling sod,  
Was not so soft and warm and sweet.

Their pilgrimage's period  
A few swift moons have seen complete  
Since mother's hands first clasped and shod  
The little feet.

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## III.

The little hands that never sought  
Earth's prizes, worthless all as sands,  
What gift has death, God's servant, brought  
The little hands?

We ask : but love's self silent stands,  
Love, that lends eyes and wings to thought  
To search where death's dim heaven expands.

Ere this, perchance, though love know nought,  
Flowers fill them, grown in lovelier lands,  
Where hands of guiding angels caught  
The little hands.

IV.

The little eyes that never knew  
Light other than of dawning skies,  
What new life now lights up anew  
The little eyes?

Who knows but on their sleep may rise  
Such light as never heaven let through  
To lighten earth from Paradise?

No storm, we know, may change the blue  
Soft heaven that haply death desries ;  
No tears, like these in ours, bedew  
The little eyes.

## v.

Was life so strange, so sad the sky,  
So strait the wide world's range,  
He would not stay to wonder why  
Was life so strange ?

Was earth's fair house a joyless grange  
Beside that house on high  
Whence Time that bore him failed to estrange ?

That here at once his soul put by  
All gifts of time and change,  
And left us heavier hearts to sigh  
‘Was life so strange ?’

VI.

Angel by name love called him, seeing so fair  
The sweet small frame ;  
Meet to be called, if ever man's child were,  
Angel by name.

Rose-bright and warm from heaven's own heart he came,  
And might not bear  
The cloud that covers earth's wan face with shame.

His little light of life was all too rare  
And soft a flame :  
Heaven yearned for him till angels hailed him there  
Angel by name.

**VII.**

The song that smiled upon his birthday here  
Weeps on the grave that holds him undefiled  
Whose loss makes bitterer than a soundless tear  
The song that smiled.

His name crowned once the mightiest ever styled  
Sovereign of arts, and angel : fate and fear  
Knew then their master, and were reconciled.

But we saw born beneath some tenderer sphere  
Michael, an angel and a little child,  
Whose loss bows down to weep upon his bier  
The song that smiled.

*ONE OF TWAIN.*

## I.

ONE of twain, twin-born with flowers that waken,  
Now hath passed from sense of sun and rain :  
Wind from off the flower-crowned branch hath shaken  
One of twain.

One twin flower must pass, and one remain :  
One, the word said soothly, shall be taken,  
And another left : can death refrain ?

Two years since was love's light song mistaken,  
Blessing then both blossoms, half in vain ?  
Night outspeeding light hath overtaken  
One of twain.

## II.

Night and light ? O thou of heart unwary,  
Love, what knowest thou here at all aright,  
Lured, abused, misled as men by fairy  
    Night and light ?

Haply, where thine eyes behold but night,  
Soft as o'er her babe the smile of Mary  
Light breaks flowerwise into new-born sight.

What though night of light to thee be chary ?  
What though stars of hope like flowers take flight ?  
Seest thou all things here, where all see vary  
    Night and light ?

*DEATH AND BIRTH.*

DEATH and birth should dwell not near together :  
Wealth keeps house not, even for shame, with dearth :  
Fate doth ill to link in one brief tether  
    Death and birth.

Harsh the yoke that binds them, strange the girth  
Seems that girds them each with each : yet whether  
Death be best, who knows, or life on earth ?

Ill the rose-red and the sable feather  
Blend in one crown's plume, as grief with mirth :  
Ill met still are warm and wintry weather,  
    Death and birth. . .

*BIRTH AND DEATH.*

BIRTH and death, twin-sister and twin-brother,  
Night and day, on all things that draw breath,  
Reign, while time keeps friends with one another  
    Birth and death.

Each brow-bound with flowers diverse of wreath,  
Heaven they hail as father, earth as mother,  
Faithful found above them and beneath.

Smiles may lighten tears, and tears may smother  
Smiles, for all that joy or sorrow saith :  
Joy nor sorrow knows not from each other  
    Birth and death.

*BENEDICTION.*

BLEST in death and life beyond man's guessing  
Little children live and die, possest  
Still of grace that keeps them past expressing  
Blest.

Each least chirp that rings from every nest,  
Each least touch of flower-soft fingers pressing  
Aught that yearns and trembles to be prest,

Each least glance, gives gifts of grace, redressing  
Grief's worst wrongs : each mother's nurturing breast  
Feeds a flower of bliss, beyond all blessing  
Blest.

*ÉTUDE RÉALISTE.*

## I.

A baby's feet, like sea-shells pink,  
Might tempt, should heaven see meet,  
An angel's lips to kiss, we think,  
A baby's feet.

Like rose-hued sea-flowers toward the heat  
They stretch and spread and wink  
Their ten soft buds that part and meet.

No flower-bells that expand and shrink  
Gleam half so heavenly sweet  
As shine on life's untrodden brink  
A baby's feet.

II.

A baby's hands, like rosebuds furled  
Whence yet no leaf expands,  
Ope if you touch, though close upcurled,  
A baby's hands.

Then, fast as warriors grip their brands  
When battle's bolt is hurled,  
They close, clenched hard like tightening bands.

No rosebuds yet by dawn impearled  
Match, even in loveliest lands,  
The sweetest flowers in all the world—  
A baby's hands.

## III.

A baby's eyes, ere speech begin,  
Ere lips learn words or sighs,  
Bless all things bright enough to win  
A baby's eyes.

Love, while the sweet thing laughs and lies,  
And sleep flows out and in,  
Sees perfect in them Paradise.

Their glance might cast out pain and sin,  
Their speech make dumb the wise,  
By mute glad godhead felt within  
A baby's eyes.

*BAB YHOOD.*

## I.

A BABY shines as bright  
If winter or if May be  
On eyes that keep in sight  
A baby.

Though dark the skies or grey be,  
It fills our eyes with light,  
If midnight or midday be.

Love hails it, day and night,  
The sweetest thing that may be  
Yet cannot praise aright  
A baby.

## II.

All heaven, in every baby born,  
All absolute of earthly leaveen,  
Reveals itself, though man may scorn  
    All heaven.

Yet man might feel all sin forgiven,  
All grief appeased, all pain outworn,  
By this one revelation given.

Soul, now forget thy burdens borne :  
Heart, be thy joys now seven times seven :  
Love shows in light more bright than morn  
    All heaven.

## III.

What likeness may define, and stray not  
From truth's exactest way,  
A baby's beauty? Love can say not  
What likeness may.

The Mayflower loveliest held in May  
Of all that shine and stay not  
Laughs not in rosier disarray.

Sleek satin, swansdown, buds that play not  
As yet with winds that play,  
Would fain be matched with this, and may not:  
What likeness may?

## IV.

Rose, round whose bed  
Dawn's cloudlets close,  
Earth's brightest-bred  
Rose !

No song, love knows,  
May praise the head  
Your curtain shows.

Ere sleep has fled,  
The whole child glows  
One sweet live red  
Rose.

*FIRST FOOTSTEPS.*

A LITTLE way, more soft and sweet  
Than fields aflower with May,  
A babe's feet, venturing, scarce complete  
A little way.

Eyes full of dawning day  
Look up for mother's eyes to meet,  
Too blithe for song to say.

Glad as the golden spring to greet  
Its first live leaflet's play,  
Love, laughing, leads the little feet  
A little way.

*A NINTH BIRTHDAY.*

FEBRUARY 4, 1883.

## I.

THREE times thrice hath winter's rough white wing  
Crossed and curdled wells and streams with ice  
Since his birth whose praises love would sing  
Three times thrice.

Earth nor sea bears flower nor pearl of price  
Fit to crown the forehead of my king,  
Honey meet to please him, balm, nor spice.

Love can think of nought but love to bring  
Fit to serve or do him sacrifice  
Ere his eyes have looked upon the spring  
Three times thrice.

II.

Three times thrice the world has fallen on slumber,  
Shone and waned and withered in a trice,  
Frost has fettered Thames and Tyne and Humber  
Three times thrice,

Fogs have swoln too thick for steel to slice,  
Cloud and mud have soiled with grime and umber  
Earth and heaven, defaced as souls with vice,

Winds have risen to wreck, snows fallen to cumber,  
Ships and chariots, trapped like rats or mice,  
Since my king first smiled, whose years now number  
Three times thrice.

## III.

Three times thrice, in wine of song full-flowing,  
Pledge, my heart, the child whose eyes suffice,  
Once beheld, to set thy joy-bells going  
Three times thrice.

Not the lands of palm and date and rice  
Glow more bright when summer leaves them glowing,  
Laugh more light when suns and winds entice.

Noon and eve and midnight and cock-crowing,  
Child whose love makes life as paradise,  
Love should sound your praise with clarions blowing  
Three times thrice.

*NOT A CHILD.*

## I.

‘Not a child : I call myself a boy,’  
Says my king, with accent stern yet mild,  
Now nine years have brought him change of joy ;  
‘Not a child.’

How could reason be so far beguiled,  
Err so far from sense’s safe employ,  
Stray so wide of truth, or run so wild ?

Seeing his face bent over book or toy,  
Child I called him, smiling : but he smiled  
Back, as one too high for vain annoy—  
Not a child.

## II.

Not a child? alack the year!  
What should ail an undefiled  
Heart, that he would fain appear  
Not a child?

Men, with years and memories piled  
Each on other, far and near,  
Fain again would so be styled :

Fain would cast off hope and fear,  
Rest, forget, be reconciled :  
Why would you so fain be, dear,  
Not a child?

## III.

Child or boy, my darling, which you will,  
Still your praise finds heart and song employ,  
Heart and song both yearning toward you still,  
Child or boy.

All joys else might sooner pall or cloy  
Love than this which inly takes its fill,  
Dear, of sight of your more perfect joy.

Nay, be aught you please, let all fulfil  
All your pleasure ; be your world your toy :  
Mild or wild we love you, loud or still,  
Child or boy.

*TO DORA DORIAN.*

CHILD of two strong nations, heir  
Born of high-souled hope that smiled,  
Seeing for each brought forth a fair  
Child,

By thy gracious brows, and wild  
Golden-clouded heaven of hair,  
By thine eyes elate and mild,

Hope would fain take heart to swear  
Men should yet be reconciled,  
Seeing the sign she bids thee bear,  
Child.

*THE ROUNDDEL.*

A ROUNDDEL is wrought as a ring or a starbright sphere,  
With craft of delight and with cunning of sound unsought,  
That the heart of the hearer may smile if to pleasure  
his ear

A roundel is wrought.

Its jewel of music is carven of all or of aught—  
Love, laughter, or mourning—remembrance of rapture  
or fear—  
That fancy may fashion to hang in the ear of thought.

As a bird's quick song runs round, and the hearts in us  
hear

Pause answer to pause, and again the same strain caught,  
So moves the device whence, round as a pearl or tear,

A roundel is wrought.

*AT SEA.*

‘FAREWELL and adieu’ was the burden prevailing  
Long since in the chant of a home-faring crew ;  
And the heart in us echoes, with laughing or wailing,  
Farewell and adieu.

Each year that we live shall we sing it anew,  
With a water untravelled before us for sailing  
And a water behind us that wrecks may bestrew.

The stars of the past and the beacons are paling,  
The heavens and the waters are hoarier of hue :  
But the heart in us chants not an all unavailing  
Farewell and adieu.

*WASTED LOVE.*

WHAT shall be done for sorrow  
With love whose race is run ?  
Where help is none to borrow,  
What shall be done ?

In vain his hands have spun  
The web, or drawn the furrow :  
No rest their toil hath won.

His task is all gone thorough,  
And fruit thereof is none :  
And who dare say to-morrow  
What shall be done ?

*BEFORE SUNSET.*

LOVE's twilight wanes in heaven above,  
On earth ere twilight reigns :  
Ere fear may feel the chill thereof,  
Love's twilight wanes.

Ere yet the insatiate heart complains  
'Too much, and scarce enough,'  
The lip so late athirst refrains.

Soft on the neck of either dove  
Love's hands let slip the reins :  
And while we look for light of love  
Love's twilight wanes.

*A SINGING LESSON.*

FAR-FETCHED and dear-bought, as the proverb rehearses,  
Is good, or was held so, for ladies : but nought  
In a song can be good if the turn of the verse is  
Far-fetched and dear-bought.

As the turn of a wave should it sound, and the thought  
Ring smooth, and as light as the spray that disperses  
Be the gleam of the words for the garb thereof wrought.

Let the soul in it shine through the sound as it pierces  
Men's hearts with possession of music unsought ;  
For the bounties of song are no jealous god's mercies,  
Far-fetched and dear-bought.

*FLOWER-PIECES*

## I.

## LOVE LIES BLEEDING.

LOVE lies bleeding in the bed whereover  
Roses lean with smiling mouths or pleading :  
Earth lies laughing where the sun's dart clove her :  
    Love lies bleeding.

Stately shine his purple plumes, exceeding  
Pride of princes : nor shall maid or lover  
Find on earth a fairer sign worth heeding.

Yet may love, sore wounded, scarce recover  
Strength and spirit again, with life receding :  
Hope and joy, wind-winged, about him hover :  
    Love lies bleeding.

## II.

## LOVE IN A MIST.

Light love in a mist, by the midsummer moon mis-  
guided,  
Scarce seen in the twilight garden if gloom insist,  
Seems vainly to seek for a star whose gleam has derided  
Light love in a mist.

All day in the sun, when the breezes do all they list,  
His soft blue raiment of cloudlike blossom abided  
Unrent and unwithered of winds and of rays that kissed.

Blithe-hearted or sad, as the cloud or the sun subsided,  
Love smiled in the flower with a meaning whereof none  
wist  
Save two that beheld, as a gleam that before them glided,  
Light love in a mist.

*THREE FACES.*

## I.

## VENTIMIGLIA.

THE sky and sea glared hard and bright and blank :  
Down the one steep street, with slow steps firm and free,  
A tall girl paced, with eyes too proud to thank  
    The sky and sea.

One dead flat sapphire, void of wrath or glee,  
Through bay on bay shone blind from bank to bank  
The weary Mediterranean, drear to see.

More deep, more living, shone her eyes that drank  
The breathless light and shed again on me,  
Till pale before their splendour waned and shrank  
    The sky and sea.

II.

GENOA.

Again the same strange might of eyes, that saw  
In heaven and earth nought fairer, overcame  
My sight with rapture of reiterate awe,

Again the same.

The self-same pulse of wonder shook like flame  
The spirit of sense within me : what strange law  
Had bid this be, for blessing or for blame ?

To what veiled end that fate or chance foresaw  
Came forth this second sister face, that came  
Absolute, perfect, fair without a flaw,

Again the same ?

## III.

## VENICE.

Out of the dark pure twilight, where the stream  
Flows glimmering, streaked by many a birdlike bark  
That skims the gloom whence towers and bridges gleam  
Out of the dark,

Once more a face no glance might choose but mark  
Shone pale and bright, with eyes whose deep slow beam  
Made quick the twilight, lifeless else and stark.

The same it seemed, or mystery made it seem,  
As those before behoden ; but St. Mark  
Ruled here the ways that showed it like a dream  
Out of the dark.

*EROS.*

1.

EROS, from rest in isles far-famed,  
With rising Anthesterion rose,  
And all Hellenic heights acclaimed  
Eros.

The sea one pearl, the shore one rose,  
All round him all the flower-month flamed  
And lightened, laughing off repose.

Earth's heart, sublime and unashamed,  
Knew, even perchance as man's heart knows,  
The thirst of all men's nature named  
Eros.

## II.

Eros, a fire of heart untamed,  
A light of spirit in sense that glows,  
Flamed heavenward still ere earth defamed  
Eros.

Nor fear nor shame durst curb or close  
His golden godhead, marred and maimed,  
Fast round with bonds that burnt and froze.

Ere evil faith struck blind and lamed  
Love, pure as fire or flowers or snows,  
Earth hailed as blameless and unblamed  
Eros.

## III.

Eros, with shafts by thousands aimed  
At laughing lovers round in rows,  
Fades from their sight whose tongues proclaimed  
Eros.

But higher than transient shapes or shows  
The light of love in life inflamed  
Springs, toward no goal that these disclose.

Above those heavens which passion claimed  
Shines, veiled by change that ebbs and flows,  
The soul in all things born or framed,  
Eros.

*SORROW.*

SORROW, on wing through the world for ever,  
Here and there for awhile would borrow  
Rest, if rest might haply deliver  
    Sorrow.

One thought lies close in her heart gnawn thorough  
With pain, a weed in a dried-up river,  
A rust-red share in an empty furrow.

Hearts that strain at her chain would sever  
The link where yesterday frets to-morrow :  
All things pass in the world, but never  
    Sorrow.

*SLEEP.*

SLEEP, when a soul that her own clouds cover  
Wails that sorrow should always keep  
Watch, nor see in the gloom above her  
    Sleep,

Down, through darkness naked and steep,  
Sinks, and the gifts of his grace recover  
Soon the soul, though her wound be deep.

God beloved of us, all men's lover,  
All most weary that smile or weep  
Feel thee afar or anear them hover,  
    Sleep.

*ON AN OLD ROUNDDEL*

*TRANSLATED BY D. G. ROSSETTI FROM THE  
FRENCH OF VILLON.*

## I.

DEATH, from thy rigour a voice appealed,  
And men still hear what the sweet cry saith,  
Crying aloud in thine ears fast sealed,  
    Death.

As a voice in a vision that vanisheth,  
Through the grave's gate barred and the portal steeled  
The sound of the wail of it travelleth.

Wailing aloud from a heart unhealed,  
It woke response of melodious breath  
From lips now too by thy kiss congealed,  
    Death

## III.

Ages ago, from the lips of a sad glad poet  
Whose soul was a wild dove lost in the whirling snow,  
The soft keen plaint of his pain took voice to show it  
Ages ago.

So clear, so deep, the divine drear accents flow,  
No soul that listens may choose but thrill to know it,  
Pierced and wrung by the passionate music's throe.

For us there murmurs a nearer voice below it,  
Known once of ears that never again shall know,  
Now mute as the mouth which felt death's wave  
o'erflow it  
Ages ago.

*A LANDSCAPE BY COURBET.*

Low lies the mere beneath the moorside, still  
And glad of silence : down the wood sweeps clear  
To the utmost verge where fed with many a rill

Low lies the mere.

The wind speaks only summer : eye nor ear  
Sees aught at all of dark, hears aught of shrill,  
From sound or shadow felt or fancied here.

Strange, as we praise the dead man's might and skill,  
Strange that harsh thoughts should make such heavy  
cheer,  
While, clothed with peace by heaven's most gentle will,  
Low lies the mere.

*A FLOWER-PIECE BY FANTIN.*

HEART'S EASE or pansy, pleasure or thought,  
Which would the picture give us of these?  
Surely the heart that conceived it sought  
Heart's ease.

Surely by glad and divine degrees  
The heart impelling the hand that wrought  
Wrought comfort here for a soul's disease.

Deep flowers, with lustre and darkness fraught,  
From glass that gleams as the chill still seas  
Lean and lend for a heart distraught  
Heart's ease.

*A NIGHT-PIECE BY MILLET.*

WIND and sea and cloud and cloud-forsaking  
Mirth of moonlight where the storm leaves free  
Heaven awhile, for all the wrath of waking  
Wind and sea.

Bright with glad mad rapture, fierce with glee,  
Laughs the moon, borne on past cloud's o'ertaking  
Fast, it seems, as wind or sail can flee.

One blown sail beneath her, hardly making  
Forth, wild-winged for harbourage yet to be,  
Strives and leaps and pants beneath the breaking  
Wind and sea.

*'MARZO PAZZO.'*

MAD March, with the wind in his wings wide-spread,  
Leaps from heaven, and the deep dawn's arch  
Hails re-risen again from the dead

Mad March.

Soft small flames on rowan and larch  
Break forth as laughter on lips that said  
Nought till the pulse in them beat love's march.

But the heartbeat now in the lips rose-red  
Speaks life to the world, and the winds that parch  
Bring April forth as a bride to wed

Mad March.

*DEAD LOVE.*

DEAD love, by treason slain, lies stark,  
White as a dead stark-stricken dove :  
None that pass by him pause to mark  
    Dead love.

His heart, that strained and yearned and strove  
As toward the sundawn strives the lark,  
Is cold as all the old joy thereof.

Dead men, re-risen from dust, may hark  
When rings the trumpet blown above :  
It will not raise from out the dark  
    Dead love.

*DISCORD.*

UNRECONCILED by life's fleet years, that fled  
With changeful clang of pinions wide and wild,  
Though two great spirits had lived, and hence had sped  
    Unreconciled ;

Though time and change, harsh time's imperious child,  
That wed strange hands together, might not wed  
High hearts by hope's misprision once beguiled ;

Faith, by the light from either's memory shed,  
Sees, radiant as their ends were undefiled,  
One goal for each—not twain among the dead  
    Unreconciled.

*CONCORD.*

RECONCILED by death's mild hand, that giving  
Peace gives wisdom, not more strong than mild,  
Love beholds them, each without misgiving  
    Reconciled.

Each on earth alike of earth reviled,  
Hated, feared, derided, and forgiving,  
Each alike had heaven at heart, and smiled.

Both bright names, clothed round with man's thanks-  
    giving,  
Shine, twin stars above the storm-drifts piled,  
Dead and deathless, whom we saw not living  
    Reconciled.

*MOURNING.*

ALAS my brother ! the cry of the mourners of old  
That cried on each other,  
All crying aloud on the dead as the death-note rolled,  
Alas my brother !

As flashes of dawn that mists from an east wind smother  
With fold upon fold,  
The past years gleam that linked us one with another.

Time sunders hearts as of brethren whose eyes behold  
No more their mother :  
But a cry sounds yet from the shrine whose fires wax  
cold,  
Alas my brother !

*APEROTOS EROS.*

STRONG as death, and cruel as the grave,  
Clothed with cloud and tempest's blackening breath,  
Known of death's dread self, whom none outbrave,  
    Strong as death,

Love, brow-bound with anguish for a wreath,  
Fierce with pain, a tyrant-hearted slave,  
Burns above a world that groans beneath.

Hath not pity power on thee to save,  
Love? hath power no pity? Nought he saith,  
Answering: blind he walks as wind or wave,  
    Strong as death.

*TO CATULLUS.*

My brother, my Valerius, dearest head  
Of all whose crowning bay-leaves crown their mother  
Rome, in the notes first heard of thine I read  
    My brother.

No dust that death or time can strew may smother  
Love and the sense of kinship inly bred  
From loves and hates at one with one another.

To thee was Cæsar's self nor dear nor dread,  
Song and the sea were sweeter each than other :  
How should I living fear to call thee dead  
    My brother ?

*'INSULARUM OCCELLE.'*

SARK, fairer than aught in the world that the lit skies  
cover,  
Laughs only behind her cliffs, and the seafarers mark  
As a shrine where the sunlight serves, though the blown  
clouds hover,  
Sark.

We mourn, for love of a song that outsang the lark,  
That nought so lovely behoden of Sirmio's lover  
Made glad in Propontis the flight of his Pontic bark.

Here earth lies lordly, triumphal as heaven is above her,  
And splendid and strange as the sea that upbears as an  
ark,  
As a sign for the rapture of storm-spent eyes to discover,  
Sark.

*IN SARK.*

AEREAST and ahead of the sea is a crag's front cloven asunder  
With strong sea-breach and with wasting of winds whence terror  
is shed

As a shadow of death from the wings of the darkness on waters  
that thunder

Abreast and ahead.

At its edge is a sepulchre hollowed and hewn for a lone man's bed,  
Propped open with rock and agape on the sky and the sea  
thereunder,

But roofed and walled in well from the wrath of them slept its  
dead.

Here might not a man drink rapture of rest, or delight above  
wonder,

Beholding, a soul disembodied, the days and the nights that fled,  
With splendour and sound of the tempest around and above  
him and under,

Abreast and ahead?

*IN GUERNSEY.*

TO THEODORE WATTS.

## I.

THE heavenly bay, ringed round with cliffs and moors,  
Storm-stained ravines, and crags that lawns inlay,  
Soothes as with love the rocks whose guard secures  
    The heavenly bay.

O friend, shall time take ever this away,  
This blessing given of beauty that endures,  
This glory shown us, not to pass but stay?

Though sight be changed for memory, love ensures  
What memory, changed by love to sight, would say—  
The word that seals for ever mine and yours  
    The heavenly bay.

## II.

My mother sea, my fostress, what new strand,  
What new delight of waters, may this be,  
The fairest found since time's first breezes fanned  
    My mother sea?

Once more I give me body and soul to thee,  
Who hast my soul for ever: cliff and sand  
Recede, and heart to heart once more are we.

My heart springs first and plunges, ere my hand  
Strike out from shore: more close it brings to me,  
More near and dear than seems my fatherland,  
    My mother sea.

## III.

Across and along, as the bay's breadth opens, and o'er  
us

Wild autumn exults in the wind, swift rapture and strong  
Impels us, and broader the wide waves brighten before  
us

Across and along.

The whole world's heart is uplifted, and knows not  
wrong;

The whole world's life is a chant to the sea-tide's chorus ;  
Are we not as waves of the water, as notes of the song ?

Like children unworn of the passions and toils that wore  
us,

We breast for a season the breadth of the seas that  
throng,

Rejoicing as they, to be borne as of old they bore us

Across and along.

## IV.

On Dante's track by some funereal spell  
Drawn down through desperate ways that lead not back  
We seem to move, bound forth past flood and fell  
    On Dante's track.

The grey path ends : the gaunt rocks gape : the black  
Deep hollow tortuous night, a soundless shell,  
Glares darkness : are the fires of old grown slack ?

Nay, then, what flames are these that leap and swell  
As 'twere to show, where earth's foundations crack,  
The secrets of the sepulchres of hell  
    On Dante's track ?

## v.

By mere men's hands the flame was lit, we know,  
From heaps of dry waste whin and casual brands :  
Yet, knowing, we scarce believe it kindled so  
By mere men's hands.

Above, around, high-vaulted hell expands,  
Steep, dense, a labyrinth walled and roofed with woe,  
Whose mysteries even itself not understands.

The scorn in Farinata's eyes aglow  
Seems visible in this flame : there Geryon stands :  
No stage of earth's is here, set forth to show  
By mere men's hands.

## VI.

Night, in utmost noon forlorn and strong, with heart athirst and  
fasting,

Hungers here, barred up for ever, whence as one whom dreams  
affright

Day recoils before the low-browed lintel threatening doom and casting  
Night.

All the reefs and islands, all the lawns and highlands, clothed with  
light,

Laugh for love's sake in their sleep outside: but here the night  
speaks, blasting

Day with silent speech and scorn of all things known from depth to  
height.

Lower than dive the thoughts of spirit-stricken fear in souls forecasting  
Hell, the deep void seems to yawn beyond fear's reach, and higher  
than sight

Rise the walls and roofs that compass it about with everlasting  
Night.

## VII.

The house accurst, with cursing sealed and signed,  
Heeds not what storms about it burn and burst :  
No fear more fearful than its own may find

The house accurst.

Barren as crime, anhungered and athirst,  
Blank miles of moor sweep inland, sere and blind,  
Where summer's best rebukes not winter's worst.

The low bleak tower with nought save wastes behind  
Stares down the abyss whereon chance reared and nursed  
This type and likeness of the accurst man's mind,

The house accurst.

## VIII.

Beloved and blest, lit warm with love and fame,  
The house that had the light of the earth for guest  
Hears for his name's sake all men hail its name  
Beloved and blest.

This eyrie was the homeless eagle's nest  
When storm laid waste his eyrie : hence he came  
Again, when storm smote sore his mother's breast.

Bow down men bade us, or be clothed with blame  
And mocked for madness : worst, they sware, was best :  
But grief shone here, while joy was one with shame,  
Beloved and blest.

*ENVOI.*

FLY, white butterflies, out to sea,  
Frail pale wings for the winds to try,  
Small white wings that we scarce can see  
Fly.

Here and there may a chance-caught eye  
Note in a score of you twain or three  
Brighter or darker of tinge or dye.

Some fly light as a laugh of glee,  
Some fly soft as a low long sigh :  
All to the haven where each would be  
Fly.



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